United Nations E/2000/L.32

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
26 September 2000

Original: English

Resumed substantive session of 2000
New York, 18 October 2000
Agenda item 13 (a)
Economic and environmental questions: sustainable development

Draft resolution submitted by the President of the Council on the basis of informal consultations held on his behalf by Bagher Asadi (Islamic Republic of Iran)

Report of the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling its decision 1995/226 of 1 June 1995, approving the establishment of an ad hoc open-ended Intergovernmental Panel on Forests to pursue consensus and formulate coordinated proposals for action towards the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests,

Recalling also its resolution 1997/65 of 25 July 1997, approving the establishment of an ad hoc open-ended Intergovernmental Forum on Forests to continue the intergovernmental policy dialogue on forests and to promote and facilitate the implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests,

Taking into account decision 8/2[1] of the Commission on Sustainable Development, in which the Commission welcomed the report of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests on its fourth session[2] and endorsed the conclusions and proposals for action contained therein, in particular regarding an international arrangement on forests,[3]

1. *Decides* that the main objective of the international arrangement on forests[3] shall be to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end, the purpose of such an international arrangement being to

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2000, Supplement No. 9* (E/2000/29), chap. I, sect. B.
[2] E/CN.17/2000/14.
[3] Ibid., sect. II, annex, appendix.

00-66038 (E) 021000

promote the implementation of internationally agreed actions on forests, at the national, regional and global levels, to provide a coherent, transparent and participatory global framework for policy implementation, coordination and development, and to carry out principal functions, based on the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,[4] the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests (Forest Principles),[5] chapter 11 of Agenda 21[6] and the outcomes of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests process, in a manner consistent with and complementary to existing international legally binding instruments relevant to forests;

2. *Also decides* that, to achieve the above-mentioned objective, the international arrangement on forests shall perform the following principal functions:

(a) Facilitating and promoting the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action as well as other actions that may be agreed upon, inter alia, through national forest programmes and other integrated programmes relevant to forests; catalyse, mobilize and generate financial resources; and mobilize and channel technical and scientific resources to this end, inter alia, by taking steps towards the broadening and development of mechanisms and/or further initiatives to enhance international cooperation;

(b) Providing a forum for continued policy development and dialogue among Governments, which would involve international organizations and other interested parties, including major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, to foster a common understanding on sustainable forest management and to address forest issues and emerging areas of priority concern in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated manner;

(c) Enhancing cooperation as well as policy and programme coordination on forest-related issues among relevant international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, as well as contributing to synergies among them, including coordination among donors;

(d) Fostering international cooperation, including North-South and public-private partnerships, as well as cross-sectoral cooperation at the national, regional and global levels;

(e) Monitoring and assessing progress at the national, regional and global levels through reporting by Governments, as well as by regional and international organizations, institutions and instruments, and on this basis considering future actions needed;

(f) Strengthening political commitment to the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests through: ministerial engagement; the development of ways to liaise with the governing bodies of international and

---

[4] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex I.

[5] Ibid., annex III.

[6] Ibid., annex II.

regional organizations, institutions and instruments; and the promotion of action-oriented dialogue and policy formulation related to forests;

3. *Further decides*, in order to achieve the objective and to carry out the functions outlined above:

(a) To establish an intergovernmental body called the United Nations Forum on Forests;

(b) To invite the executive heads of relevant organizations of the United Nations system and heads of other relevant international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments to form a collaborative partnership on forests to support the work of the United Nations Forum and to enhance cooperation and coordination among participants, and to call upon their governing bodies and the heads thereof to support the activities of the collaborative partnership on forests so as to achieve the goals of the United Nations Forum;

(c) That the United Nations Forum shall, inter alia:

(i) Within five years, on the basis of the assessment referred to in paragraph 2 (e) above, consider the parameters of a mandate for developing a legal framework on all types of forests, with a view to recommending them to the Economic and Social Council and through the Council to the General Assembly, it being understood that this process could develop the financial provisions to implement any future agreed legal framework, and also consider recommendations made by expert groups referred to in paragraph 4 (k) below, on the establishment of mechanisms on finance, technology transfer and trade;

(ii) Take steps to devise approaches towards appropriate financial and technology transfer support to enable the implementation of sustainable forest management, as recommended under the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and Intergovernmental Forum on Forests processes;

4. *Decides* that the United Nations Forum should be established as a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council composed of all States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies with full and equal participation, including voting rights, and having the following working modalities:

(a) The United Nations Forum should be open to all States and operate in a transparent and participatory manner, and should also involve relevant international and regional organizations, including regional economic integration organizations, institutions and instruments, as well as major groups, as identified in Agenda 21;

(b) The United Nations Forum shall operate under the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council provided that this is not in contradiction with the provisions of the present paragraph;

(c) The supplementary arrangements established by the Economic and Social Council for the Commission on Sustainable Development in Council decisions 1993/215 of 12 February 1993 and 1995/201 of 8 February 1995 shall also apply to the United Nations Forum; and, within the rules of procedure, the work of the United Nations Forum should build upon the transparent and participatory practices established by the Commission, the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests;

(d) The Bureau of the United Nations Forum shall consist of one Chairperson and four Vice-Chairpersons, one of whom should also act as the Rapporteur, in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution;

(e) The United Nations Forum shall report to the Economic and Social Council and through the Council to the General Assembly;

(f) The United Nations Forum shall seek ways and means of strengthening synergies and coordination in policy development and implementation of forest-related activities, inter alia, through making the reports of its sessions available to relevant United Nations bodies and other international forest-related organizations, instruments and intergovernmental processes;

(g) The United Nations Forum should work on the basis of a multi-year programme of work, drawing on the elements reflected in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Forest Principles, chapter 11 of Agenda 21 and the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action;

(h) The United Nations Forum should maintain close links with the Commission on Sustainable Development, including, inter alia, through the convening of joint bureau meetings, taking particular account of the importance of ensuring the coherence of its activities with the broader sustainable development agenda carried out by the Commission;

(i) The United Nations Forum may hold its sessions at venues other than United Nations Headquarters in accordance with established United Nations rules and practices;

(j) The United Nations Forum should initially meet annually, for a period of up to two weeks, subject to the review referred to below, with a high-level ministerial segment to be held for two to three days, as required, which segment could include a one-day policy dialogue with the heads of organizations participating in the collaborative partnership on forests, as well as other forest-related international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments; and should ensure the opportunity to receive and consider inputs from representatives of major groups as identified in Agenda 21, in particular through the organization of multi-stakeholder dialogues;

(k) The United Nations Forum may recommend, as appropriate, the convening of ad hoc expert groups of limited duration, involving experts from developed and developing countries, for scientific and technical advice, as well as for consideration of mechanisms and strategies to finance and transfer environmentally sound technologies; and may encourage country-sponsored initiatives, such as international expert meetings;

5. *Recommends* that the General Assembly, taking into account its resolution 1798 (XVII) of 11 December 1962, make the necessary provisions so that the travel expenses for one representative of each member State participating in a session of the United Nations Forum that is also a Member State of the Commission on Sustainable Development, are paid from the regular budget of the United Nations;

6. *Invites* voluntary extrabudgetary contributions in support of participation of representatives of developing countries that are not members of the Commission

on Sustainable Development, in sessions of the United Nations Forum and its subsidiary bodies;

7. *Decides* that the United Nations Forum shall:

(a) Hold a short organizational meeting, as soon as possible, with the purpose of electing its officers, determining the duration of their term of office and considering all proposals and options concerning the location of the secretariat, in conjunction with four days of informal consultations regarding the draft multi-year programme of work;

(b) Hold its first substantive session in 2001 with its provisional agenda comprising the following items:

(i) Adoption of the multi-year programme of work;

(ii) Development of a plan of action for the implementation of Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests proposals for action, which shall address financial provisions;

(iii) Initiation of the United Nations Forum's work with the collaborative partnership on forests;

(iv) Provisional agenda, date and venue for its second substantive session in 2002;

(v) Proposal of venues of future United Nations Forum sessions;

8. *Recommends* that the collaborative partnership on forests should build on a high-level informal group, such as the Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests,[7] which would receive guidance from the United Nations Forum; facilitate and promote coordinated and cooperative action, including joint programming and submissions of coordinated proposals to the concerned governing bodies; and facilitate donor coordination; and that such a partnership would submit coordinated inputs and progress reports to the United Nations Forum, operate in an open, transparent and flexible manner, and undertake periodic reviews of its effectiveness;

9. *Decides* that the United Nations Forum should complete its consideration of the issues noted in paragraph 3 (c) (ii) above as a matter of priority in the context of the multi-year programme of work;

10. *Requests* the Secretary-General to establish a compact secretariat comprising highly qualified staff, constituted in accordance with established rules and procedures of the United Nations and strengthened through staff from secretariats of international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments, which secretariat, to support the work described above, should service the United Nations Forum, support the collaborative partnership on forests and also coordinate its activities with the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development;

---

[7] At present, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests is composed of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Center for International Forestry Research, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Tropical Timber Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Bank and is chaired by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

11. *Decides*, bearing in mind what is stated in paragraph 10 above and unless otherwise decided intergovernmentally, that the secretariat shall be located preferably at United Nations Headquarters in New York, with the understanding that a recommendation for a final decision on this matter should be made at the first organizational meeting of the United Nations Forum, in early 2001, taking into consideration all proposals thereon;

12. *Encourages* the executive heads of relevant organizations of the United Nations system and heads of other relevant international and regional organizations, institutions and instruments to support the United Nations Forum secretariat, inter alia, through seconding of staff, such as was effected during the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests process;

13. *Recommends* that the funding for the functioning of the United Nations Forum and its secretariat should be provided from the regular budget of the United Nations, within existing resources, resources of organizations participating in the partnership and extrabudgetary resources provided by interested donors, with specific modalities to be determined by relevant bodies of the United Nations and the governing bodies of the other organizations concerned;

14. *Also recommends* that the General Assembly decide on the funding for the functioning of the United Nations Forum and its secretariat in accordance with the budget procedures established by the Assembly in its resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General in proposing future United Nations programme budgets to include provisions for the United Nations Forum and its secretariat;

16. *Calls upon* interested donor Governments, financial institutions and other organizations to make voluntary financial contributions to a trust fund to be established in order to facilitate, in particular, an early start of the work of the United Nations Forum and its secretariat;

17. *Decides* that the international arrangement on forests should be dynamic and should adapt to evolving conditions and that the effectiveness of this arrangement shall be reviewed in five years, and also decides that the five-year review of this arrangement shall address the United Nations Forum's institutional framework as well, including its position within the United Nation system;

18. *Also decides* that the establishment of the United Nations Forum should not be construed as constituting a precedent.